News from U.S. Rep. Stephanie Herseth For Immediate Release

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HERSETH INTRODUCES TRICARE BILL

Legislation Compensates National Guard and Reserve Members Left Without Access To TRICARE Coverage

March 22, 2005, Washington, D.C. – Rep. Stephanie Herseth recently introduced legislation to compensate members of the National Guard and Reserve who were denied access to TRICARE following their active duty service. Herseth's bill, H.R. 1343, would ensure that all qualifying National Guard and Reserve members would be reimbursed for the difference between any out of pocket cost monthly premiums paid for non-TRICARE insurance and the amount the member would have paid in premiums for the TRICARE Reserve Selected program during the same period.

"National Guard and Reserve members from South Dakota and around the country have served their country with honor and distinction, and they have earned the benefits that every soldier deserves," Herseth said. "As we continue to rely on Guard and Reserve troops to fight the war on terror, the United States policy regarding health care insurance should recognize the tremendous sacrifices made by Guard and Reserve troops and their families"

Herseth added that many Guard and Reserve soldiers have expressed to her that the high price of health care premiums is one of their most pressing concerns. Herseth is ranking member on the Veterans Affairs' Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity.

Many Guards and Reservists were denied access to TRICARE health insurance because their 180 days of transitional coverage ended before the new TRICARE Reserve Select program began. The new TRICARE Reserve Select program was created by Congress in the FY2005 Defense Authorization bill. Herseth's bill would reimburse National Guard and Reserve soldiers who have been activated since September 11, 2001 and served for more than 30 days in support of a contingency operation. To be eligible to enroll in the TRICARE Reserve Select program, the member must sign an agreement to continue serving for a period of one year or more in the reserve after their active duty ends. For every 90 days of consecutive active duty service the member may purchase one year of TRICARE. TRICARE Reserve Select coverage will begin once the member's eligibility for 180 days of transitional TRICARE coverage ends.

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